CORRECTIONAL OFFICER BURNOUT

Further Analyses

ROBERT D. MORGAN
Texas Tech University
RICHARD A. VAN HAVEREN
Georgia State University
CHRISTY A. PEARSON
University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of several variables that have led to inconsistent results in previous studies on correctional officer stress, as well as expand previous research by exploring the relationship of two new variables (i.e., occupational title and work station) with correctional officer stress. Participants in this study consisted of 250 correctional officers from a Southwestern state department of corrections. Results indicated that older and more educated officers reported increased levels of personal accomplishment, whereas less experienced officers and officers with increasing job responsibilities experienced increased levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion and decreased levels of personal accomplishment. Furthermore, gender comparisons indicated that female correctional officers were less likely to respond impersonally to inmates than their male counterparts. Implications and areas for future research are discussed.

As the prison population continues to blossom (e.g., Irwin, 1996), the conditions within correctional facilities will remain stressful for inmates (e.g., Hassine, 1996; Toch, 1992) and staff (Anson & Bloom, 1988; Finn, 1998; Harris, 1983) alike. Although inmates have numerous programs available to help them cope with the stress of their

AUTHORS' NOTE: *The authors wish to thank Dale R. Fuqua for his helpful comments in a draft of this article.* *Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Robert D. Morgan, Texas Tech University, Department of Psychology, Box 42051, Lubbock, TX 79409-2051; e-mail: robert.morgan@ttu.edu.*

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living environment (e.g., individual and group psychotherapy, stress management programs, recreational therapy), correctional staff have limited resources designed to help them cope with the stress of the prison environment. To further compound the problem, correctional environments are typically considered "tough" and "dangerous" places of employment, perceptions that may lead to the development of machismo attitudes (Cheek & Miller, 1983). This may be especially true for front-line staff. Prison environments contribute to aggressive, rigid, and power-motivated behaviors, as evidenced in the Zimbardo Prison Experiment (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). Unfortunately, correctional staff that develop machismo attitudes may be unlikely to ask for help during times of stress.

The inherent stress in correctional work has led to the following health-related problems: cardiac difficulties (New York State Department of Corrections, 1975; Wynne, 1977), substance abuse (New York State Department of Corrections, 1975; Svenson, Jarvis, & Campbell, 1995), cardiovascular and hypertension problems (Harenstam, Palm, & Theorell, 1988), and an increase in sick leave (Harenstam et al., 1988; New York State Department of Corrections, 1975). Another result of occupational stress for correctional officers is burnout (Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986).

Burnout is a depletion of an individual's physical and mental resources (Freudenberger, 1974), leading to personal and professional difficulties. Unfortunately, individuals suffering from occupational burnout experience general health and family problems (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991; Kahill, 1988), as well as "psychological withdrawal from work" (Cherniss, 1980, p. 16), which may lead to employee turnover and patient abuse (e.g., Pillemer & Bachman-Prehn, 1991).

Burnout is a threefold process of depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion experienced by individuals in service-oriented positions (Maslach, 1982). According to Maslach (1982), depersonalization first occurs as employees become frustrated with their job and less concerned for their clients and results in increasingly negative work-related attitudes. The second stage of burnout is a reduction in personal accomplishment, which equates to a job-related sense of inadequacy and feelings of failure (Maslach, 1982). Emotional exhaustion is the final stage of

burnout and occurs when workers feel overextended by their work (Maslach, 1982), resulting in decreased job productivity (Perlman & Hartman, 1982).

Previous research has demonstrated that correctional work is a stressful occupation (e.g., Anson & Bloom, 1988; Cheek & Miller, 1983; Harris, 1983). In fact, Lindquist and Whitehead (1986) found that 68% of correctional officers considered their job to be at least moderately stressful, and approximately 33% reported experiencing symptoms of burnout. Clearly, correctional work is a high-risk occupation, but what factors contribute to work-related stress or burnout?

Several factors related to correctional officer job stress and/or burnout include: role ambiguity (e.g., Brodsky, 1982; Cheek & Miller, 1983; Dignam, Barrera, & West, 1986; Shamir & Drory, 1982); role conflict (Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Shamir & Drory, 1982); work load (Dignam et al., 1986; Long & Vogues, 1987; Shamir & Drory, 1982; Triplett, Mullings, & Scarborough, 1996); understaffing (Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Rutter & Fielding, 1988); overcrowding (Brodsky, 1982; Shamir & Drory, 1982); lack of environmental control (Lombardo, 1981; Rutter & Fielding, 1988) and lack of participation in decision making (Harris, 1983; Lasky, Gordon, & Srebalus, 1986; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986); inmate contact (Cheek & Miller, 1983; Hughes & Zamble, 1993; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Saylor & Wright, 1992), the anticipation of inmate contact (Smith, 1988), confrontations with inmates, and job danger (Brodsky, 1982; Grossi & Berg, 1991; Long & Vogues, 1987; Triplett et al., 1996); and personality styles (Augestad & Levander, 1992; Long & Vogues, 1987). Gerstein, Topp, and Correll (1987) found that the working environment was more closely related to correctional officer burnout than were staff characteristics; however, both were significant in predicting burnout. Furthermore, when correctional officers feel ineffective and powerless with inmates, they are more likely to experience emotional and physical exhaustion (Cherniss, 1980; Gerstein et al., 1987; Lombardo, 1981). It is noted that many of these citations are dated; however, these are the most recent references available regarding the factors that contribute to correctional officer stress and burnout.

In spite of the previous research evaluating factors related to correctional officer stress and burnout, many questions remain unanswered.

Of particular concern are the inconsistent relationships in staff demographics (i.e., age, gender, education, length of job tenure) as well as the effects of institutional conditions (i.e., shift, prison security level) on correctional officer stress and burnout.

Research findings have been inconsistent with regard to the relation between age and length of tenure with correctional officer stress and burnout. Although some studies have found older officers to experience greater levels of stress (e.g., Gerstein et al., 1987; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986), others have found that age was not related to job stress (Triplett et al., 1996; Van Voorhis, Cullen, Link, & Wolfe, 1991). Tenure, a related variable, has also produced inconsistent results, with increased tenure leading to greater levels of stress in some studies (e.g., Dollard & Winefield, 1995; Grossi & Berg, 1991; Lasky et al., 1986; Patterson, 1992; Saylor & Wright, 1992; Schlacter, 1980; Triplett et al., 1996; Van Voorhis et al., 1991) but not others (e.g., Dignam et al., 1986; Gerstein et al., 1987; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Shamir & Drory, 1982).

Similarly, research on correctional officers' gender and educational level has resulted in conflicting findings. Although some studies have found gender to be significantly related to stress (e.g., Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985; Stinchcomb, 1986; Zupan, 1986), others have not (e.g., Triplett et al., 1996). In an expansion of their previous work, Van Voorhis et al. (1991) found that gender alone did not significantly correlate with job stress; however, if supervisory and peer support were controlled for, women did appear to experience more stress than their male counterparts. Regarding educational level, Jurik, Halemba, Musheno, and Boyle (1985) found that more educated correctional officers experienced less job dissatisfaction, whereas Van Voorhis et al. (1991) found no such relationship.

Studies of the effects of institutional conditions, such as shift work and prison security level, have also resulted in similar inconsistencies. Van Voorhis et al. (1991) found that an officer's shift (i.e., day, evening, night) did not result in greater levels of job stress, whereas Lindquist and Whitehead (1986) found that officers assigned to the day shift reported greater levels of role conflict. Similarly, Hughes and Zamble (1993) found work shift to be a commonly reported stressor by front-line correctional workers. A related issue that remains uninvestigated is the effect of rotating correctional officers through

shifts rather than utilizing a model whereby officers are hired for a particular shift and remain on that shift until they accrue seniority. When evaluating prison security levels (e.g., minimum, medium, maximum) as a source of stress, Van Voorhis et al. (1991) found that officers in maximum security settings tended to experience greater levels of job stress, whereas Lasky et al. (1986) found that officers working in various security levels did not differ in their reported symptoms of distress (although officers in maximum security levels did indicate a greater concern for their personal safety).

Of interest, previous research has neglected to investigate the effects of job title and workstation on correctional officers' stress or burnout. A correctional officer's job title may be related to, but not dependent on, tenure, as promotions in correctional work are frequently performance based. Furthermore, job title is frequently an indication of the responsibilities placed on a correctional officer, with advanced officers receiving increased responsibilities and work-related demands. It seems reasonable to suggest that increased demands and responsibilities, in addition to other stressors in the correctional environment, could lead to increased levels of occupational burnout. Similarly, areas of the prison in which officers are assigned to work (i.e., workstation) has remained uninvestigated, in spite of the potential long-term effects of stress incurred by officers assigned to work areas that are typically viewed as more dangerous. Prisons are becoming increasingly overcrowded (Irwin, 1996), and particularly crowded areas such as cafeterias, recreational yards, and living areas (i.e., cell houses) are typically viewed as high-risk areas in a penitentiary setting. Officers assigned to these workstations may experience increased stress due to a sustained need to be "on guard," thus resulting in occupational burnout.

Clearly, further research is warranted to differentiate between those factors (i.e., personal and institutional) that lead to job-related burnout for correctional officers. To reduce correctional officer burnout, clarifying the previously mentioned inconsistencies is necessitated. Thus, the purpose of this research was to examine the relationship of several primary variables that have led to inconsistent results in previous studies (i.e., age, gender, race, education, shift, tenure, hours of client contact, security level), as well as expand previous research by investigat-

ing the effects of two new variables (i.e., occupational title and work station) on correctional officer burnout. It was hypothesized that the two new variables, occupational title and workstation, would be associated with correctional officer burnout.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants for this study consisted of 250 correctional officers from a Southwestern state department of corrections. The participants included 187 men and 54 women with a mean age of 36.7 years (*SD* = 10.98). The officers were predominantly Caucasian (*n* = 205); however, other racial groups were represented in this sample including African American (*n* = 10), Hispanic/Latino(a) (*n* = 1), American Indian/Native American (*n* = 24), and 4 people who defined themselves as other. The average years of education was 13.04 (*SD* = 1.99). The majority of these correctional officers were employed in medium security correctional facilities (40.3%), although 22.6% worked in minimum security facilities, 19.9 % worked in community facilities, and 17.3% worked in maximum security facilities. Of the 250 correctional officers in this study, 45.4% worked the day shift, 34.1% worked the evening shift, and 20.5% worked the night shift. The participants in this study reported a mean of 7.02 hours (*SD* = 2.32) of inmate contact per shift. Lastly, participants of varying correctional officer rank were represented: cadets (*n* = 32) are entry-level correctional officers assigned to a 6-month probationary period; correctional officer I (*n* = 55) includes officers who have successfully completed the 6-month probationary period and are assigned routine correctional duties; correctional officer II (*n* = 139) have at least 18 months of experience and have been promoted based on performance; and correctional officer III (*n* = 15) have at least 24 months of experience and have been promoted based on performance. Level I-position officers are assigned routine correctional tasks, level II officers are responsible for all correctional related tasks, and level III positions are leadership positions and include the supervision of other officers.

MATERIALS

The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) was used to assess psychological or affective dimensions of burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The MBI-HSS is a 22-item instrument in which respondents are asked to rate each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (*very mild*) to 7 (*very strong*). This instrument measures three aspects of the burnout syndrome: depersonalization, personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion. The Depersonalization subscale measures impersonal and unfeeling responses toward recipients such as customers or clients (e.g., "I don't really care what happens to some clients"). The Personal Accomplishment subscale assesses achievement aspects related to work (i.e., feelings of competence, success). An example from this subscale is, "I have accomplished many worthwhile things on this job." Finally, the Emotional Exhaustion subscale measures feelings of being emotionally drained by work demands (e.g., "I feel used up at the end of the workday").

Maslach et al. (1996) reported adequate internal reliability coefficients for the three subscales (Emotional Exhaustion = .90, Depersonalization = .79, and Personal Accomplishment = .71). Numerous studies have also evaluated the instrument's test-retest reliability, and it has been concluded that "overall, longitudinal studies of the MBI-HSS have found a high degree of consistency with each subscale that does not seem to diminish markedly from a period of one month to a year" (e.g., Maslach et al., 1996, p. 12). Other research has concluded that the MBI, with the three subscales, is an accurate measure of burnout (Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981).

PROCEDURE

Survey packets were randomly administered by mail to 800 correctional officers employed in the participating state's department of corrections. The packets included a survey, cover letter, demographic sheet, and a postage-paid self-addressed envelope. This sample of 800 represented approximately 46% of the state's population of correctional officers. A total of 250 surveys were returned for a 31% response rate.

RESULTS

PRIMARY VARIABLES

To examine the relationship of previously studied variables on correctional officer stress, preliminary analyses were conducted to evaluate the effect and relationship of eight primary variables (i.e., age, gender, race, education, shift, tenure, hours of client contact, security level) with correctional officer burnout. One-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) procedures for categorical variables (i.e., gender, race, shift, security level, tenure) and multiple regression analyses for continuous variables (i.e., age, education, hours of inmate contact) were conducted.

The one-way MANOVAs resulted in no significant between-group differences for race, shift, or security level on correctional officer burnout; however, gender, Wilks's Lambda (3, 233) = 3.53, $p = 0.016$, and length of employment (i.e., tenure), Wilks's Lambda (15, 640) = 3.40, $p = 0.000$, did result in differing levels of correctional officer burnout. Follow-up univariate analyses for gender indicated that males reported significantly more depersonalization, $F(1, 235) = 10.60$, $p = 0.001$, than did their female counterparts, but males and females did not report significantly different levels of personal accomplishment, $F(1, 235) = 1.15$, $p = 0.284$, or emotional exhaustion, $F(1, 235) = 3.71$, $p = 0.055$. Follow-up univariate analyses for tenure resulted in significant differences for the depersonalization, $F(5, 234) = 5.84$, $p = 0.000$, personal accomplishment, $F(5, 234) = 4.65$, $p = 0.000$, and emotional exhaustion, $F(5, 234) = 8.14$, $p = 0.000$ subscales, respectively. A Tukey post hoc procedure on the depersonalization subscale indicated that officers with less than 1 year of work reported significantly less depersonalization than officers with more than 3 years of experience ($p < .05$), but not more than officers with 1 to 2 years of experience ($p > .05$). No significant differences were found between any of the other tenured groups on the depersonalization subscale ($p > .05$). A Tukey post hoc procedure on the personal accomplishment subscale indicated that correctional officers with less than 1 year of work experience reported significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment than did correctional officers with 5 to 9 years and officers with more than 15 years of correctional work expe-

rience ($p < .05$). There were no other significant differences between correctional officer groups for tenure on the personal accomplishment subscale. Further post hoc analysis, again using the Tukey procedure, indicated that correctional officers with less than 1 year of experience had significantly lower scores on emotional exhaustion than officers with 1 to 2 years, 3 to 4 years, 5 to 9 years, 10 to 15 years, and more than 15 years of correctional work experience, respectively ($p < .05$).

Simple regression analyses were used to identify the significant contributions of age, education, and hours of inmate contact, independently, to correctional officers' experience of burnout. Results of these analyses indicated that age, $F(1, 35) = 4.58$, $p = 0.03$, and education $F(1, 232) = 27.57$, $p = 0.00$, contributed significantly to correctional officers' sense of personal accomplishment but did not contribute to their experience of depersonalization or emotional exhaustion. These findings indicate that older and more educated officers are more likely to experience increased feelings of personal accomplishment. Hours of inmate contact did not significantly contribute to the officers' experience of burnout as measured by depersonalization, personal accomplishment, or emotional exhaustion.

NEW VARIABLES

To examine the effect of two previously unstudied variables (job title and work station) on correctional officer stress, one-way MANOVA procedures were utilized. Using Wilks's Lambda criterion, differences in job title resulted in significantly different levels of reported burnout, approximate $F(9, 562.34) = 5.69$, $p = 0.00$, whereas work station did not, approximate $F(18, 651.02) = 1.42$, $p = 0.12$. Follow-up univariate analyses for job title indicated significant between-group differences for all three subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, depersonalization, $F(3, 233) = 13.76$, $p = 0.000$; personal accomplishment, $F(3, 233) = 3.85$, $p = 0.010$; and emotional exhaustion, $F(3, 233) = 12.81$, $p = 0.000$. Post hoc analysis using a Tukey procedure for the depersonalization subscale indicated that cadets (entry-level correctional officer) reported significantly lower levels of depersonalization than did correctional officers I, II, and III ($p < .05$). On the personal accomplishment subscale, a similar Tukey procedure indicated that cadets reported significantly more personal accom-

plishment than correctional officer IIs ($p < .05$) but not significantly more personal accomplishment than correctional officers I or III ($p > .05$). It should be noted that the difference between the means of the cadets and the correctional officer IIIs were slightly greater than the difference between the means of the cadets and correctional officer IIs; however, the mean difference between cadets and correctional officer IIIs was not statistically significant, most likely due to the limited number of officers in this group. Finally, for the emotional exhaustion subscale, a Tukey procedure indicated that the cadets reported significantly less emotional exhaustion than did correctional officers I, II, or III.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was twofold: (a) to further evaluate previously studied variables that have produced inconsistent results with regard to correctional officer burnout and (b) to examine the effect of two never-before-evaluated variables in relation to correctional officer burnout.

The results of this study indicated that racial differences do not lead to differing levels of correctional officer burnout, which is consistent with previous findings regarding race and correctional officer stress (Triplett et al., 1996; Van Voorhis et al., 1991). This is an important finding considering the need to focus on the recruitment of minorities for employment in correctional settings (e.g., Ferrell, Morgan, & Winterowd, 2000).

As previously indicated, several inconsistencies exist in the literature regarding staff and institutional variables and correctional officer stress. Research on correctional officers' gender has resulted in conflicting findings as female officers have been found to experience more occupational stress in some studies (e.g., Cullen et al., 1985; Stinchcomb, 1986; Zupan, 1986), whereas other studies found no such gender differences (e.g., Triplett et al., 1996; Van Voorhis et al., 1991), or only marginal differences (e.g., Gross, Larson, Urban, & Zupan, 1994). The results of this study indicate that females were less likely than their male counterparts to respond to inmates in an impersonal manner or with a lack of concern. No differences were discov-

ered between females' and males' sense of achievement or feelings of being emotionally drained by the demands of correctional work. Several possible explanations exist for the differences between those studies indicating gender differences and those studies that do not, but one plausible explanation may be that women have learned to adjust (i.e., cope) to the stressful field of corrections. The three studies that found gender differences for correctional officer stress were conducted in the 1980s, whereas all four studies finding no (or marginal) gender differences occurred in the 1990s. Correctional work for females remains a relatively new phenomenon in comparison to male employment standards, and it is possible that women have learned to adjust to the demands and stressors of the correctional environment. In fact, Van Voorhis et al. (1991) found that women are able to obtain more peer and supervisory support than their male counterparts, which decreased their experience of stress. As noted previously, corrections work frequently results in the development of "machismo" attitudes (Cheek & Miller, 1983), and it is possible that women developed an ability to obtain social support whereas men are blocked from such support due to a perceived need to be "macho." Further research should investigate the relationship of correctional officers' gender with moderator variables such as "macho" attitudes and social support. Nevertheless, the results of this study indicated that female correctional officers, compared to their male counterparts, are not experiencing increased levels of occupational burnout.

The effects of age, education, and tenure have also resulted in conflicting results regarding correctional officer burnout. Some researchers have found that younger officers experience greater levels of occupational stress and burnout (Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986) or bad work days (Gerstein et al., 1987), whereas others found no such age effects (e.g., Triplett et al., 1996). The results of this study found that cadets and older officers with more education were more likely to experience a sense of personal accomplishment but did not experience increased levels of depersonalization or emotional exhaustion. In spite of the findings by Triplett et al. (1996), it does appear that younger officers may experience greater levels of work stress (Gerstein et al., 1987; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986), whereas older officers are able to elicit more peer support than their younger counterparts (Van Voorhis et al., 1991) and are more likely to report a sense of personal

accomplishment. In addition, encouraging officers to continue their education may increase their sense of personal accomplishment, which might also result in concurrent improvements in their job performance. The effects of tenure on correctional officer stress and burnout have been less clear.

The effect of tenure on correctional officer stress and burnout has resulted in inconsistent findings as some studies have found newer staff to experience less job stress (e.g., Triplett et al., 1996; Van Voorhis et al., 1991), whereas others have found newer staff to experience greater levels of burnout (e.g., Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Shamir & Drory, 1982), and still others have found no relationship between length of time on the job and occupational burnout (Dignam et al., 1986; Gerstein et al., 1987). The results of this study found that less experienced officers tended to report lower levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion and higher levels of personal accomplishment. Unfortunately, the results of this study do not explain the reason for the inconsistent findings with regard to job tenure and occupational stress and burnout (nor the progress on the burnout trajectory) experienced by correctional officers; nevertheless, it does appear that correctional officers with differing lengths of employment experience differing levels of job-related stress and burnout. Fortunately, peer support can be helpful in decreasing correctional officers' level of burnout (Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986) and can be implemented as a preventive measure rather than a remedial strategy (e.g., Dignam et al., 1986). Thus, executive staff that implement designed strategies aimed at increasing levels of social and peer support to officers of differing levels of experience may succeed in decreasing the overall levels of stress and burnout exhibited by officers in their prisons.

This study did not find the number of inmate contact hours to be a significant predictor of correctional officer burnout. Although previous studies have shown that inmate contact can relate to correctional officer stress (Cheek & Miller, 1983; Hughes & Zamble, 1993; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Saylor & Wright, 1992), it may be that this source of stress does not lead to burnout. Interestingly, the quality of inmate contact may be related to correctional officer stress, as the potential for violence and difficulty dealing with certain inmate problems appear to be contributing factors (Lindquist & Whitehead,

1986). Along similar lines, Dignam et al. (1986) found that negative inmate contact led to increased correctional officer burnout, whereas positive direct contact led to increased feelings of personal accomplishment. Thus, it does appear that inmate contact may contribute to correctional officer stress, but this stress does not necessarily progress to burnout. Furthermore, the quality of the officer-to-inmate contact must be considered, and increasing the number of positive interactions between inmates and correctional officers may lead to decreased job-related stress.

Job title and workstation, variables not previously examined in correctional officer stress studies, were explored in this study. Notably, significant group differences were found for correctional officers with differing job titles. Job title was assessed separately from tenure as officers are likely to be promoted to positions with increased responsibility based on their job performance rather than based on their length of employment. This study indicates that officers in entry-level positions (cadets) experience lower levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion and higher levels of personal accomplishment than do officers with other job titles. It may be that officers newly introduced into the correctional environment are reporting unusually low levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion and high levels of personal accomplishment because they are overly optimistic regarding their ability to be of service to society and possibly helping a troubled population, but as they develop and mature as correctional officers, this enthusiasm wanes and is replaced by a more realistic, if not cynical, approach to the job. Also of interest, the workstation where correctional officers were assigned (e.g., living areas, the "yard," recreational area, cafeteria) did not result in differing levels of burnout. Therefore, officers working in areas of prisons that are frequently seen as more dangerous (e.g., cafeteria, living areas) do not experience increased levels of occupational burnout compared to officers working areas of prisons typically viewed as less dangerous (e.g., patrolling the perimeter of the prison, stationed to tower lookout duty, stationed in institutional control centers).

Nonsignificant findings in this study are also of interest. Previous researchers (Van Voorhis et al., 1991) found that officers employed in higher security levels experience increased levels of stress. This study did not support these findings; however, it should be noted that the

maximum security prisons in this study were locked-down facilities. Therefore, correctional officers in higher security institutions, which are typically perceived as more dangerous than lower security facilities, may benefit by increasing the security control in these facilities. Also of interest was the finding that shift work did not appear to lead to correctional officer burnout. Although shift work may lead to role confusion for correctional officers (e.g., Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986), it is not a source of stress that is rated highly by correctional workers (Hughes & Zamble, 1993) and does not appear to lead to feelings of depersonalization or emotional exhaustion. It should be noted however, that the officers participating in this study alternate shift assignments on a regular basis; therefore, they are not assigned to any one shift for a long period of time. It may be that, and future research should investigate if, rotating correctional officer shifts result in reduced levels of stress and burnout.

Several implications for reducing correctional officer burnout warrant highlighting. Correctional officers in this study were periodically rotated into differing shifts and workstations, variables that did not result in increased correctional officer burnout. Although it is speculative to base conclusions on nonsignificant research findings, this result does suggest that regularly scheduled rotations of shift and workstation may help reduce the potential for correctional officer burnout. Also of interest are implications for correctional officer training. Most corrections departments require annual training for staff. The conclusions of this study suggest the need for experienced correctional officers (i.e., increased tenure, title) to receive annual training with a specific focus on sources and symptoms of stress and burnout, as well as stress management techniques. Finally, correctional officers with more education were found to report higher levels of personal accomplishment. Thus, to increase correctional officers' sense of personal accomplishment, administrators should consider increasing incentives for officers who continue their education.

Although this study has increased the knowledge of those factors contributing to correctional officer stress and burnout and appears to have reduced some of the inconsistencies in the correctional officer literature, it is not without limitations. Two limitations warrant particular attention. First, this study continued studying the relationship between job-related difficulties and correctional officers' experiences

on a single outcome variable. Studies have typically evaluated correctional officers' experience of stress or burnout, but this univariate model of data analyses limits the quality of the information obtained. Stress and burnout are related dimensions, and by studying these variables simultaneously as outcome measures, we will learn more about those stressful factors that are likely to lead to occupational difficulties for this group of workers. Although we may not be able to create a correctional environment that is stress-free for its workers, we may be able to continue to identify and alter those variables that result in critical levels of stress and lead to correctional officer burnout. Second, this study continued a trend of evaluating stress that results from correctional officer work rather than focusing on how correctional officers cope with job-related stress or prevention strategies to reduce stress and burnout. Clearly, correctional environments are challenging and, at times, dangerous places of employment. Thus, future studies need to assess how correctional officers cope with job-related stressors as well as explore the effectiveness of stress/burnout reduction strategies and techniques (e.g., educational incentives, incentives for physical conditioning, rotating work schedules). Such research would provide a much greater opportunity to intervene on the behalf of correctional officers to promote a healthier and less detrimental place of employment.

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